

Community weighs in on University arena plans

Residents who live near the potential building site wonder how construction will affect them

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF
NEWS REPORTER

The neighborhood east of the University may seem like any other college neighborhood in America. The houses vary in size and structure, some modern, some historic. Some are rented by different students every year, some have been occupied by the same families for decades.

But some residents say one thing sets the neighborhood apart from others — it could soon be home to a multi-million dollar basketball arena.

The University is looking to build a basketball arena on the site now occupied by Williams' Bakery, leaving area residents wondering what will become of their homes and whether the arena construction will adhere to the current atmosphere of the neighborhood.

In a written statement dated Nov.

11, University Vice President for Advancement Allan Price said the University has been meeting with the owners of the bakery, United States Bakery, and is hopeful that a satisfactory outcome will be reached soon.

"These meetings have been very productive, and all parties are working to sort through the remaining details," the statement reads.

Media Relations Director Pauline Austin said University officials will not comment on any other aspects of the arena planning process because nothing has been finalized.

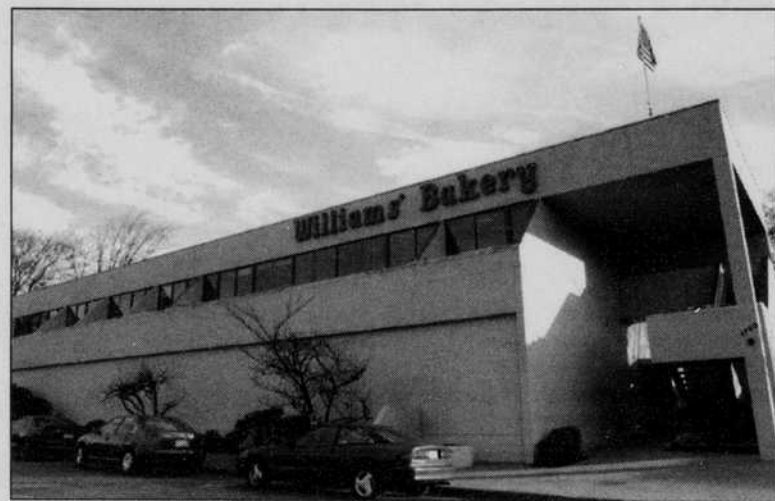
Though there is no formal plan to demolish any houses in the neighborhood, some residents say it could be an inevitable part of the arena's development and are worried their voices will be drowned out by the sounds of construction.

Sophomore Sean Davis rents a house two blocks from the tentative arena site with four friends and said though he feels no real attachment to the neighborhood, other residents have been a part of the neighborhood for decades and should have a say in what is built on the blocks surrounding their homes.

"I don't think the community really has much input into it," Davis said. "I feel bad for people who have lives here."

The Fairmount Neighbors Association, a coalition of east university neighborhood residents, has not taken a formal stance against the arena, co-chairman Jeff Nelson said, because the group wants to ensure the community has a say in what gets built in the neighborhood while maintaining a productive relationship with the University.

The Fairmount Neighbors opposed a zone change granted to Williams' Bakery last month because the rezoning removed a mandatory site review,



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Williams' Bakery's space, on 13th Avenue and Moss Street, is one of the possible locations for the University's new basketball arena.

which lets the public discuss a site's impact on the surrounding neighborhood and scrutinize any aspects of the site that may be considered a nuisance.

The city approved the rezoning earlier this month and Nelson said the Fairmount Neighbors will not

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student government is to represent the students, not the administration," he said.

Pohowalla and ASUO Accounting Coordinator Jennifer Creighton-Neiwert said the Emerald would have to file an official records request for the document, but the University administration would not release a copy of Frohnmayer's letter before press time.

The current model was developed "after severe inequities in stipends became apparent to members of the PFC and Senate," according to the ASUO Stipend Model manual.

Pohowalla said many people incorrectly view the stipend as a salary or compensation for the time they spend fulfilling their administrative duties. She stressed that stipends are intended to reimburse group members for expenses incurred while on the job and are based on the extent of the group's programs.

"Everyone sees it as a compensation, but that's not what it is," she said.

Pohowalla said there should be a correlation between what a group does for the campus and its stipends, noting that Frohnmayer pointed out the fact that in some groups as much as 70 percent of the funding went to stipends.

"To me, I would want to see a good ratio going on here," she said. "If you

have less programs than you do stipends, why are we paying you?"

Ravassipour said the stipend model wasn't a new issue.

"It was something that we had thought about, but once the budget season kinda started, we realized it was something we felt strongly about and needed to address," Ravassipour said. Creighton-Neiwert said the stipend issue came up during the PFC process because the PFC is the first group to look at the program budgets.

She added that no one should take the blame for the stipend inadequacy, calling it a "frustrating issue."

Pohowalla said the panel will work to reword the stipend manual to make it simpler and more descriptive to counter confusion about the intent of stipends, adding that the changes might include what category and range a position falls under.

Creighton-Neiwert said although the model will be revised, the panel won't start from scratch.

"We have something that's been working for three years," she said. "We will in no shape or form throw it out the window or start over."

Yet Creighton-Neiwert said she didn't know what the magnitude of the changes might be.

"It's just a way to make sure everyone's on the same page," she said. "Does that mean something may

change? Yeah."

Strauss said the revision process might include looking at the stipends individual groups receive.

Pohowalla said she took it upon herself to head a group to re-evaluate the stipend model, saying as PFC chairwoman she would be reviewing the individual job descriptions for group members during the finance process anyway.

"I knew about a week ago and everything was happening so quickly for me at that point," she said. "I was thrown into it, and I guess I had to step up."

Pohowalla said groups whose budgets include stipends and were slated to present their budgets to the PFC in the two days before the senate meeting have been moved to later sessions to allow their budgets to be reviewed using the new model.

Pohowalla said some groups have been upset because their budgets were tabled while a new model is implemented, and said she apologized to members of those groups.

Strauss also said the decision to revise the model reflects the executive's goal of fiscal responsibility.

"I just want to emphasize how this demonstrates the executive's demonstration to responsible use of the fee and affordable education in general," he said.

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